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177 on account of new influences affecting the regulation of marriage, and
121 above all in the megalithic ritual, new forms of which were constantly being acquired from further south.

121 Expeditions to other islands confirmed this initial impression of a
121 northward movement of culture, and it was for this reason that, as part
184 of an effort to establish a historical sequence of cultures, I turned my attention to the most northerly islet of this group, namely Vao. There I found an earlier form of kinship structure in which, despite the uniformly patrilocal nature of all Small Island culture, the matrilineal element received more overt expression than in those islets further south where patrilineal influence is being constantly reinforced by the same cultural drift as is responsible for the new forms of megalithic ritual. The same matrilineal element also dominated the mortuary rites, showing that these also belonged to an older layer of culture than those in the remaining Small Islands. It is for this reason that, despite the fact that my main field-work was carried out on Atchin, I propose to devote this first volume to Vao in order to supply a firm historical basis for the accounts to be given in later volumes of the more recent developments of megalithic culture in this region.

122 For hospitality during my visits to Vao, where I did not, as on Atchin, live in native quarters, I am indebted to the kindness and real friendship of Père Jamond of the Marist Mission, at that time Roman Catholic priest on that island, where he had lived alone for over nine years. Our first meeting had been one of unveiled hostility on his part, since he had heard exaggerated accounts of my performances in native dances on Atchin, of which he severely disapproved. But once that little difficulty had been overcome and he recognised a fellow-student of native culture, our friendship quickly ripened, and he was indeed the only white man in the islands with whom I felt I could speak about native matters on equal terms. He was a keen philologist, spoke Vao well (which he described as being "*aussi beau que le français*"), and had compiled a considerable dictionary of the language. His flock, however, was small, consisting for the most part of a few old men and young children, and the majority of the population was quite untouched by Mission influence, the natives of all the Small Islands having at that time, despite the presence of Missions of several denominations, for the most part definitely turned their faces against any form of Christianity. Nevertheless, owing to his humour and understanding and quite obvious sincerity, the natives regarded him with affection, and in cases of trouble with white men, not only the natives of Vao but even those from other islands ostensibly belonging to other Missions often sought his aid.

While fully conscious of the pitfalls attending a comparatively short stay under such conditions, these were, however, considerably minimised by the fact that, as known to the Vao natives, I had lived half a year

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on Atchin, where I had become familiar with many of the problems involved, and was thus primed with a knowledge of the general outlines of Vao culture before ever I set foot on the island. In the second place, I was already known personally to many of the Vao natives who intermarry with Atchin. In the third place, I had the good fortune to meet immediately with a first-class informant, Ma-taru, a man in the prime of life, who had once been a member of a Presbyterian Mission school but had renounced Christianity and had returned to Vao in order to rebuild the fortunes of his family by an intensive prosecution of megalithic ritual. This man was descended from the former inhabitants of the now submerged island of Tolamp which once flourished between Atchin and Vao, who, owing to historical circumstances to be recounted below, hold a privileged position in the cycle of megalithic rites. His information was therefore of the highest value. Not having time to learn the language of Vao, which is different from that of Atchin though the two islands are only three miles apart, my work with him was carried out in pidgin-English supplemented by comparisons with Atchin, which I spoke sufficiently well by that time to serve as a useful check. On matters of tribal history and kinship his information was supplemented by interviews with Pelur, one of the leading men on Vao, whose photograph appears on Plates V and VIII, who knew no pidgin-English and for whom Ma-taru acted as interpreter. Added to this was the fact that I had evolved a highly efficient technique of recording and cross-referencing which was the admiration of the natives, who believed therefore that anything I had once learnt I never forgot.

It had been my original intention to include in this introductory volume only the information thus recorded, together with a survey of Small Island culture as a whole in order to place it in its proper setting. When I had already started preparing this material for publication, however, my attention was called to an account of certain aspects of Vao ritual that had appeared in *Les Missions Catholiques*, a French Mission journal, from the pen of the Rev. Jean Godefroy, S.M., who had succeeded Père Jamond after my visit as Marist priest on Vao. Perusal of this showed it to be of great value, particularly since the aspects of Vao culture that it dealt with were in the main other than those that I had myself investigated. At the same time, where his information coincided with mine he showed such a high degree of accuracy and understanding of the problems that I had every confidence that those parts of his work that I was myself not able to check were equally reliable. It was therefore with the greatest regret that I read, half-way through the serial publication of his work, that Père Godefroy had died from elephantiasis in Vila after a vain trip to Europe to re-establish his health. Nevertheless, being desirous to make my own volume on Vao as complete as

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antiquity. It is an interesting fact, however, that, though Godefroy spoke of this ritual in conversation, no accounts of it are included in his written work. Whether this was because he felt too deeply about it, as his brother suggests, or whether on account of his faith (for the same reason that is said to have led a member of the Anglican Mission to tear up his manuscript concerning the Banks Islands secret societies owing to their similarity with masonic rites) I am unable to say. It is none the less to be regretted that my own account of the chief megalithic rite called Maki, which was the chief subject of my study on Vao, stands alone in its complexity without the added illumination that the professed mystic might have shed on its more recondite meaning. Who knows that Père Godefroy may not himself have had a certain conflict in destroying what he so much admired, for when his mission on Vao came to an end he claimed to have converted a third of the population to Christianity.[1]

It remains for me in this Preface gratefully to acknowledge the receipt of the funds that have enabled this work to be prepared, and to thank those working along similar lines who have assisted in other ways. The field-work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the Wort's Fund supplemented by a small contribution from the funds of the British Association. Preparation for publication has been generously assisted by grants from the Leverhulme Trustees and from the Electors to the Wyse Studentship in Social Anthropology.

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Finally, no work on the natives of Malekula would be complete

[1] For further information regarding Père Godefroy and his Mission, see the obituary notice in the *Bulletin* mentioned above (of which the full title is to be found in the List of Authors Quoted under Godefroy, 1), dated October 20th, 1933, pp. 202 ff., and the biography by Claude Renaudy entitled *Seul chez les Canaques*.